

A N
EXPLANATION
OF THE
Church-Office
OF
BAPTISM,

In Favour of the Duty Incumbent on
Godfathers and Godmothers.

Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you : even so do unto them ; for this is the Law and the Prophets.
Mat. 7. 12.

Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God ; verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child : he shall not enter therein, Mark 10. 14, 15.

L O N D O N :
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in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1701.

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T O T H E
R E A D E R.

I Know not whether more have been frighten'd from undertaking the charitable Office of Godfather or Godmother upon the account of Pocket-charge, or a Spiritual one; the opinion that none can safely be surety, promise and engage for another, (if for himself) that he shall renounce the Devil and all his Works, the Poms and Vanity of this wicked World, and all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh; that he shall believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith; and keep God's holy Will and Commandments, and walk in the same, all the days of his Life.

If we were to sing of the Conquests of the Least of these: I cannot tell which to attribute the Tithe to, rather than the other, if not its ten thousands (at the least) to each. God forbid that they both together

To the Reader.

should ever have been able to slay so many, or but let die without being born again, born of Water and of the Holy Ghost; but if persisted in, take heed that the Church between them both, be not ground as between two Milstones.

Let it therefore not be thought impertinent, if the following Discourse both try to perswade Men to be contented to be at charges with them that come to be purified, or to take a Vow on them, Acts 21. 23, 24. And also to free the Mind and Conscience from panick fear, unreasonable scruple, and uncharitable doubt; by endeavouring to shew both the true meaning of the Church in its so dreaded office, and the Genuine sense of the most promissory words of it.

And let it be held a mighty recompence of reward thereof, if the Author's pains be crowned with the happy success of winning upon any, tho' but to the increase of one to the number of those (Titus 3. 5.) saved by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

A N
EXPLANATION
OF THE
Church-Office
O F
BAPTISM.

HE that consults the *Rubrick*
and the Order of Ministration
of Baptism, may find it the
Opinion of the Church, that
it is most convenient for Baptism to be
administred on Sundays or other Holy-
days, when most number of People come
A 3 together,

together ; because, says it, in its reason why, in the Baptism of Infants, every Man present may be put in remembrance of his own Profession made to God in his Baptism. His own profession; as if the Church did look upon the Profession to be the Baptized Person's own.

And in the Church-Catechism it is demanded, What the Godfathers and Godmothers did for the catechised Person in Baptism; the Answer is, *They did promise and vow in my Name*; it goes on, *Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe and to do as they have promised for thee?* The Answer is, *Yes.*

Again in the Sacraments, *What is required of Persons to be Baptized?* The Answer is, *Repentance and Faith.* *Why then are Infants Baptized, when by reason of their tender Age, they cannot perform them?* The Answer is, *Because they promise them both by their Sureties, which promise, when they come to Age, themselves are bound to perform.*

Who

Who can read these things and imagine, that the Church means to impose the doing of things undertaken and engaged for, upon the Sponsors?

Beside, in Reason, how can it be asked or desired of any one, to undertake that an Infant shall be a good Man, or Woman ; and to Promise and Vow to God, that such a Child shall not hereafter be ashamed of Christ, or cowardly run from his Banner, but continue his faithful Soldier and Servant unto its Life's end ?

Therefore, if you say why should any such matters be propounded at all to the Sureties ? Why ? First, suppose Baptism to be a Covenanting with God, and that there is somewhat to be engaged for on the Baptized Person's part ; and forasmuch as Infants are not capable of Covenanting for themselves in their own Persons, or so much as inwardly to give their Assent to the Agreement made with God for them in Baptism : How can there

there any at all be made but by Proxy or Representative? And the Church thought fit to appoint three at the least; the Reason of which let me no more dispute, or cavil at, than if the Law appointed, that a Man's Will or Testament should have three Witnesse, or not be of force; or if that thought fit that two Witnesse should be the least number to make Treason; so, if it thought one sufficient to prove felony upon a Man.

And as to the Promises being utter'd by the mouth of the Godfathers and Godmothers: If no words can be utter'd in behalf of another, without immediately and absolutely affecting the Person pronouncing them: Will you then say, That a Common Cryer in a Court, does proclaim a great full-mouth'd Lye in the face of it, every time he makes such Proclamation as this; My Lord, the King's Justice does straitly charge and command all Persons whatsoever to keep silence while Judgment is pronouncing? If this be the Course and Form
of

of Law, do you reckon the Cryer to be guilty of a Lye in rehearsing of those words, unless the Judge did straitly charge and command silence? or is he understood to speak what the Judge by his Authority ought in reason to command, or is supposed to do; for who regards to keep silence for the Cryer's Authority?

Farther still: If I was in such Power and Authority as Lawfully to give another his Oath, if I according to the Form thereof, do say to the Jurer, you shall swear the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth: Let none say that I am a Lye, if the Witness do's swear an untruth, and nothing but untruth; for saying to him you shall swear the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. Let not any Man think, if I administer an Oath to him, that I undertake or promise that he shall swear what is true; or that it affects me, if he swear what is false; but understand the Form, of you shall do so or so, in the sense of, you ought to do so or so, or you do here engage

engage to do so or so, or incurr the displeasure of God against your own Soul, not against mine, if you do not swear the Truth, in Righteousness, in Judgment.

Thus, when the Minister gives the Exhortation to the Godfathers and Godmothers, in these words: *Forasmuch as this Child hath promised by you his Sureties, &c. That he may know these things the better, ye [shall] call upon him to hear Sermons, and chiefly ye [shall] provide that he may learn the Creed, &c.* Who looks upon this Form as promissory at all in the Minister? Tho' it runs in the terms ye shall, ye shall; as tho' it was engaging for the Sureties themselves, that they should do such and such things in discharge of their duty and suretiship undertaken for the Baptized Infant.

Perhaps you may say, Why should not the Father and the Mother of an Infant be its Representative, or undertaker, rather than any other? Who are
more

more nearly concerned to provide for the Good of its Soul, or more engaged, more in duty bound to see to that's performing of its Baptismal Vow, and to its keeping of Covenants?

'Tis Granted, that there does lie an undoubted Charge or Duty upon Parents, *to bring up their Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*, or to restrain them from what is vicious; and it is owned too, that Children being commonly brought up in their Parents House, the Parents may have greater advantages, or frequenter opportunities of doing them Good, both by their Example and Precepts instilled into them when young, and like a tender twig easily to be bent and turned one way or other. But let none think, that the Godfathers and Godmothers are to prevent the duty of natural Parents, so as by a full discharge given them; and if they do not take away the Charge incumbent on Parents, is there not most safety in the multitude of Counsellors? Are the Parents so well able to perform themselves alone, so much

much as with additional help of two or three more called to their assistance? Then it is observable, that in Baptism a new Name is given, and commonly too the Name of one or more of the Sponsors, as tho' the Infant was to be reckon'd the Natural Off-spring of its natural Parents, and the Spiritual Off-spring of its Spiritual ones ; and if the Spiritual ones are excused from its natural maintenance, they may at an easie rate provide somewhat for its Spiritual Growth, the sincere Milk of the Word, or strong Meat, for those of great Strength, going from Grace to Grace, and from Vertue to Vertue, till they come to be perfect Men in Christ Jesus. But besides all this, is it not possible for the Parents to die e're the Child be brought to Baptism, or be Infidels themselves, whether that be likely to happen now among us or not ?

'Tis reasonable to think, that the Souls of little Children shall be a considerable part of the number of the Souls that shall be saved ; and our Church does declare, that it is certain by God's word,

word, that Children which are Baptized, (understand by lawful Ministers) dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved; therefore if there be any manner of doubt to be made concerning the safety of those that die Unbaptized; or if to die so, affor'd any scruple to be thought of concerning its lessening but in the least degree, the happiness of such: Take heed, lest in Saint *John's* Logick, it amount to an uncharitableness inconsistent with the Love of God dwelling in him, for one to see his Brother have need, and to shut up his Compassion from him.

If it be barbarous to do any thing to hinder the Natural Birth, after conception: Can the new Birth be obstructed innocently?

The Church thinks it fit for the Curates of every Parish, often to admonish the People, that they defer not the Baptism of their Children longer than the first or second Sunday next after their Birth, or other Holiday falling between,
unless

unless upon a great and reasonable cause to be approved by the Curate : God grant that the neglecting to observe this Rule, has not hinder'd, or may not hereafter prevent the Baptism of Thousands; and if the Reason was to be approved of by the Curate: I should not willingly be that Curate that shall endanger the bringing a young Child to Christ, rather than not have it brought in all its finery, or attended with a numerous Train, or the Ordinance followed with a Feast. Not as if these things were to be condemned neither, where to be done with safety to the Child and due regard had to the order of the Church.

But instead of procrastination or putting off from day to day; we are more ready to have our Children Baptized, than some Ministers are to Baptize them if any do say : We are for having it done out of hand as soon as they are born if any shall urge; and are glad if we can get a Minister to Baptize them, and run and go, and ask, and intreat it as a fa-

your

vour, and plead, and excuse, and feign,
 and invent, if not more than is true,
 to procure its being done in all haste:
 What would King *James* the First have
 said to this, if there be no Snake lurk-
 ing under it, if he would not determine,
 Whether Children dying unbaptized
 should be damn'd or not? But if he
 thought it a damnable Sin for a Mini-
 ster to refuse to baptize them; what-
 e'er he would have said to it, I answer
 thus; namely, that when a Kindness is
 asked, it ought not to be in such Mat-
 ters as a Man is not at Liberty to do,
 without incurring the displeasure of the
 Law; thus it is an unreasonable thing
 for one to entreat as a favour at the
 hands of another, that he would steal
 an Horse for him. See whether the
 Church do's not order Curates to warn
 the People, that without great Cause
 and Necessity, they procure not their
 Children to be baptized at Home in
 their House; the words are without
 like great Cause, having a little before
 said Great and reasonable Cause to be
 approved by the Curate; as if they
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should not have their Children baptized at home, unless the Curate thought there was sufficient reason for so doing.

But the Child is young, if they say, and we fear the carrying it out may endanger its Life, and we are willing to make but one trouble for all.

If this be the best, or the whole Plea; then, first, Let none think the Church uncharitable and hard-hearted toward the Bodies of young and tender Infants, while it expresses so much Charity or Concern for their Souls. The Church is so considerate, as to allow of pouring Water upon the Child, if weak, instead of dipping it; and has composed or set forth a Direction for the Baptizing of Infants at home in their Houses: If not also suffering Ministers to Celebrate that Holy Sacrament without Godfathers and Godmothers in case of Necessity; whether with *Nazi anzen*, it allows any Christian, in case of Necessity, to Baptize the Infant, or not.

The

Then secondly , Perhaps it would be an hard matter for one to shew where many , if ever one Child carefully look't after , did come short home again, for no other Reason , upon no other Account, but only for being carried to Church.

And thirdly , If many Men and Women have catch'd their Death by going abroad, or by being at Church, or in going to Receive the Holy Sacrament of Christ's most blessed Body and Blood there : What is the *Ergò*, what will you conclude from thence ; will you say , Therefore it was a rash or a mad thing in them to go out into the Cold, or to venture themselves in the Rain ? If so ; take heed that by the same way of arguing , you are not forced to bid adieu to all Marketting and Journeying , to all Visiting the Sick, even to Physicians going after their sick Patients, or to any Man's ordinary Business, walking abroad , or looking out at the Door, or Window, or changing of Clothes, for cooler in Summer,

or but for cleanliness ; if Death has sometimes happened through the means of these Things.

As to the Minister's Profit, let none say, He forbears to go home to Peoples Houses for that ; it may seem rather directly against him in that Point, to Baptize at Church ; there being no Feasts usually made there upon such occasions, if so much as a small Gratuity ever given.

And if it be thought unseemly or uncouth for a Minister to marry People at Home, or unusual to give them the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in their Parlours, unless upon their Sick Beds or Couches ; why should not the Office of one Sacrament be performed in its proper place, as well as the other, especially if there be a peculiar convenient one appointed for either ?

Why should any Man that loves the Church, and professes himself to be a Son of it ; so much as suffer his Children

dren to be Baptized any where else if he might, but upon Necessity ?

If a Child be Baptized at home with Godfathers and Godmothers, with the Office of Publick Baptism, it may seem not altogether so proper to say, *Grant that whosoever is [here] dedicated to thee by our Office and Ministry, &c.* if in a Chamber, where perhaps never any were before dedicated to God, or shall be afterwards. If it be Baptized with the Private Office of Baptism, that neither signs with the Sign of the Cross, nor receives into the Congregation of Christ's Flock, in that other solemn Form of doing it; tho', I confess, the very Baptizing of a Person may seem in Effect to receive into Christ's Fold.

And if you are for having Baptism at home to save trouble; see wherein that can be thus saved, if the Child lives, and that follows which the Church thinks Expedient; namely, if it be afterward brought into the Church, and all that done which you may find

in Private Baptism, and the Godfathers and Godmothers there undertake. Which some People, perhaps that are apt enough to think it an intolerable Charge of Duty to take upon them, may be ready enough to look upon as escaped, if they, upon the Questions and Demands made to them, look but another way, and make no answer, or stand as stiff as tho' in Armour, without giving so much Consent as a Nod or Cursy amounts to.

And take heed, lest some who are willing to perform the charitable Office of Godmother at another time, have a Superstitious Dread upon them of doing it when with Child; whereas such might do it the rather to engage others to do the same for them again, who are so soon like to stand in need of their Retaliation.

Wherefore, let none raise such Winds of Doctrine upon the Waters of Baptism, to disturb and trouble them, so as to hinder them in their course.

And

And if the Parents of *St. Augustine*,
St. Jerom, and *St. Ambrose*, did deferr
 the Baptism of these their Children till
 the thirtieth Year of their Age; or if
Constantine the Emperour did deferr his
 till twice so long, to the sixty fifth
 year of his Age, till he thought Death
 approaching; let not any Man seem
 to be contentious, if we now *have no*
such Custom, neither the Church of God.

And if you plead for the defer-
 ring of Baptism till riper years, the
 Church requires Godfathers and God-
 mothers still, as you may see in the
 Office of Baptism for such; whether
 the charging of Duty upon them be
 equivalent to that in the other Offices,
 or not.

If any scruple to Answer for the
 Children of such Parents as are of a
 different Perswasion from themselves,
 as suspecting that they will bring their
 Children up in their own Opinion and
 Belief, in their own Practice; still, un-
 less

less I could, and did promise, when Sponfor, to give the Baptized Infant Grace; (which how can I either be asked, or thought to do?) if I perform the part of a Godfather to such: Let none think that I am wanting in my Duty to the Child undertaken for, if I discharge my self in all that it is possible for me to do; such as Instruction, Advice, Admonition, Benediction, Praying for, &c.

Observe the Exhortation or Direction of the Church, how the Duty of Godfathers and Godmothers is to be performed, and see whether it runs not thus: *Forasmuch as [this Child] hath promised by you his Sureties, to renounce the Devil and all his Works, to believe in God, and to serve him: Ye must remember that it is your part and duties, to see that this Infant be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn Vow, Promise, and Profession [he] hath here made by you; and that he may know these things the better, [ye] shall call upon him to hear Sermons, and chiefly*

chiefly [ye] shall provide that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the Vulgar Tongue, and all other things that a Christian ought to know and believe to his Soul's health; and that this Child may be vertuously brought up to lead a Godly and a Christian Life, remembering always that Baptism doth represent unto us our Profession, which is to follow the Example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt Affections, and daily proceeding in all Vertue and Godliness of Living.

Now consider whether the Baptized Person is not to be taught of his God-fathers and Godmothers, that it is the Child it self that stands bound, by Promise; or that is to do what another cannot do for it. For how can I believe for another Adult Person to his Salvation, or mortifie the Deeds of

of the Flesh, so as to kill Sin in him? And therefore if I put him in mind of, and in a way how to do these things for himself, and call upon him, and upon God for him; if the Man will be brutish and hate reproof, and shut his Eyes, and stop his Ears, have I the Key of *David* to open them?

If any are afraid to undertake for a Person that they are never like to see again; who knows whether my next Neighbour may not be far removed from me into a distant part of the World; and yet if I did not scruple to Answer for any at all, for whom less than for the Child of my Neighbour or Acquaintance?

But whether the baptized Person hereafter prove Orthodox or Heretical, lives under my Eye, or in a foreign Country, be a good Liver, or an ill; mark in what wise the Church orders the Priest to speak unto the Godfathers and Godmothers: *Dearlly Beloved,*

ved, ye have brought this Child here to be baptized, ye have prayed, &c. Ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his Gospel, to grant all these things that ye have prayed for, which promise he for his part will most surely keep and perform; wherefore after this Promise made by Christ, this Infant must also faithfully for his part, promise by you that are his Sureties (until he come of Age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce the Devil, &c. Now if the Promise made by the Sureties be but till the baptized Infant come of Age to take it upon himself; how can it be capable of committing Actual Sin, till it come to such an Age as to understand and discern between Good and Evil? wherefore, if when the Child be grown, the Sponsor's Obligation ceaseth; and if till then the Child is not capable of committing Sin, so as to have it imputed; how little, if any Charge, according to this, may seem to lye upon the God-fathers and Godmothers!

Never-

Nevertheless it might be a good way to keep a Catalogue of those Persons that we have Answered for, to put us the better in mind to call upon them to remember the Profession made to God in Baptism; and if any shall do the like, the better to remember them in their Wills, or to shine in the Exercise of their Bounty toward them in the Course of their Life; such Goodness shewed to them, may the better prepare the way for good Instructions, or win upon the Affections; so as to let their most serious Admonitions sink deep into their Hearts, when they have such Tokens of the Love they bear to them, that do so kindly Advise and Counsel them, not seeking theirs, but them.

But yet let none reckon it as a sign of an unkind Sponsor, if the first Kindness and Charity be not back'd with many others; as tho' to do one good turn, did call for and claim the doing of many more for ever after; or

if it was to be counted for breach of Friendship, to do a single Act of it without another also to second it.

Again, I do not see the necessity of Partners being suited to a point, either of Age, or Quality, or Condition of Life. In the Celebration of the other Holy Sacrament, that of Christ's Body and Blood, the Poor are reckoned suitable Companions enough for the Rich; the Young for the Old; the Married for the Unmarried; so as to become Guests together at Christ's Table, or to be Partakers of one Bread together.

And if it be esteemed such an excellent Good Work to give Gifts for to raise Portions for poor Servants, or for putting Youth out Apprentice, or for Almshouses for the Aged and Decrepit, why might it not be good also to dedicate to the Encouragement, and to provide a Remedy against the Charge of bringing young Children to Christ? And as touching the Spiritual Charge or Undertaking, who can imagine

imagine, that if the Minister ask's, *I will be baptized in this Faith*, after the Rehearsal of the Articles of the Creed, he speaks of me, who may be supposed to have been Baptized long since? And if I answer, *That is my Desire*; who do's not see the Question and Answer to be so framed, as that to affect the Person to be Baptized, rather than the Sponsor?

And then as to the Sacrament itself, if any do slight that Holy Ordinance, as tho' altogether insignificant, let them consider, if there was but one place in the World where Baptism could be Administred, and but by the Hands of one only Person, how they should prize it. 'Tis said of the *English Saxons* imbracing Christianity, that in one day, Ten thousand Men, besides a Multitude of Women, and Children were Baptized by the Hands of *Paulinus* Archbishop of *York*. And if any have not been Baptized in their Infancy, or Childhood, let them not be so ashamed of Christ, and his Ways,

Ways, as not to dare to own Him,
 and Lift themselves manfully to fight
 under his Banner, against Sin, the
 World, and the Devil. Let them not
 (*Luke 7. 30.*) *reject the Counsel of God*
 against themselves, in being not Ba-
 ptized.

F I N I S.

Books printed for *Henry Bonwick* at the *Red Lion* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*.

A Defence of Diocesan Episcopacy, in Answer to a Book of *Mr. David Clarkson*, lately published, intitled, *Primitive Episcopacy*. By *Henry Maurice D.D.* The Second Edition.

Devotional Poems, Festival and Practical, on some of the Chief Christian Festivals, Fasts, Graces, Verses, &c. for the use of his Country Parishioners, especially the younger and pious Persons. By a Clergy-man of the Country.

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Letters of Religion and Vertue to several Gentlemen and Ladies, in Opposition to the Profaneness and Obscenity of those not long since published under the Names of the late Earl of *Rochester*, *Mr. Orway*, *Mr. Brown*, &c.

The Pattern of a Holy Life. A Sermon preached at *St. Paul's Cathedral*, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, and Court of Aldermen, *Decemb. 8. 1699.* being the second Sunday in Advent.

A Sermon against Prophane Swearing, preach'd at *St. Margaret's Westminster*, *Octob. 6. 1700.* Both by *Christopher Wilson A. M.* Lecturer of *St. Margaret's Westminster*.

